

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7913

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 3640

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: POLITICAL OUTLOOK

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 3138

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE POLITICAL PARTIES ARE STILL ATTEMPTING TO AGREE ON THE ISSUANCE OF DECLARATIONS DEMANDING A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY AND FREE ELECTIONS. THEIR BASIC STRATEGY HAS BEEN TO JOIN FORCES WITH THE PORTION OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR THAT IS OPPOSED TO THE REGIME IN AN ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT'S SUPPORT FOR LOPEZ. THE PARTIES HAVE NOT BEEN NOTABLY SUCCESSFUL IN DEVELOPING A UNITED FRONT AND THE OPPOSITION APPEARS TO POSE A MINIMAL THREAT TO THE REGIME AT THIS TIME. END SUMMARY.

1. THE POLITICAL PARTIES CONTINUE TO DISCUSS PLANS FOR A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY AND FREE ELECTIONS. THEY HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO AGREE ON A JOINT DECLARATION AND HAVE EVEN HAD DIFFICULTY IN DRAFTING SEPARATE BUT SIMILAR STATEMENTS. POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS HOPE TO ISSUE THE
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DECLARATIONS WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

2. THE DELAY IN ISSUING THE DECLARATION IS MAINLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE PARTIES' DESIRE TO BRING OTHER GROUPS INTO A UNITED FRONT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. PARTY SPOKESMEN HUKU TALKED TO UNIONS, TEACHERS ASSOCIATIONS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THIS ATTEMPT. HOWEVER, THEY HAVE ENCOUNTERED LITTLE RECEPTIVITY TO THEIR OVERTURES IN ANY GROUP OUTSIDE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR. A PORTION OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IS OPPOSED TO THE REGIME BUT IS TOO DISORGANIZED INTERNALLY TO INTEGRATE ITS ACTIONS WITH THOSE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES.

3. POLOFF HAD OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH LIBERAL LEADERS CARLOS ROBERTO REINA AND MODESTO RODAS ALVARADO AND NATIONALIST RICARDO ZUNIGA AUGUSTINUS IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS. THEY ARE UNITED IN WANTING TO SEE THE PRESENT REGIME MOVE TOWARD FREE ELECTIONS; HOWEVER, THEY ALL RECOGNIZE THAT CHIEF OF STATE LOPEZ IS IN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY AND WOULD BE ABLE TO CLAMP DOWN AT ANY MOMENT HE DESIRES. THEREFORE, THEY ARE TRYING TO MAINTAIN THE PARTY STRUCTURES WHILE MAKING THEIR OPINIONS KNOWN TO THE PUBLIC WITHOUT PROVOKING GOVERNMENTAL REPRESSIONS.

4. COMMENT: THE BASIC STRATEGY OF THE POLITICAL PARTY LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN TO FORM A UNITED BLOC OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO INFLUENCE UPPER LEVEL MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT WHO WOULD IN TURN PRESSURE LOPEZ INTO CALLING ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, THE PARTIES ARE SHOWING HOW DIFFICULT IT IS FOR THEM EVEN TO AGREE ON A SIMPLE DECLARATION URGING A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY. IN ADDITION, THE PART OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT IS DISUNITED AND THEREFORE IS NOT COOPERATING WITH THE PARTIES. THE ABILITY OF THE REGIME'S OPPONENTS TO UNDERMINE THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT'S SUPPORT FOR LOPEZ IS CORRESPONDINGLY DECREASED AND THUS THE OPPOSITION APPEARS TO POSE ONLY A MINIMAL THREAT TO THE GOVERNMENT AT THE PRESENT TIME. THERE ARE ALWAYS STORIES OF PURPORTED COUPS AND CHANGES OF GOVERNMENT BUT SUCH STORIES SEEM TO HAVE LITTLE BASIS IN REAL TERMS.

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